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SUBJECT: UNESCO'S 35TH GENERAL CONFERENCE: CULTURE COMMISSION

¶1. The 35th session of UNESCO's General Conference was held in Paris October 5-23. This is the first in a series of messages which will report on the deliberations of the seven General Conference Commissions.

¶2. Summary. The Culture Commission of UNESCO's 35th General Conference met October 15-19 and considered 15 proposed draft amendments to the 2010-2011 Budget as well as a number of more substantive items. Key resolutions included one on "safeguarding and preserving cultural heritage in countries in conflict, particularly in occupied territories," a second dealing with attempts to negotiate a Declaration of Principles on WWII Cultural articles, and a third on the Protection of Indigenous languages. The Jerusalem and the Occupied territories resolution was settled with minimal debate as the result of off-line Israeli-Jordanian discussions. End Summary.

BUDGET RESOLUTIONS MIRROR US POSITIONS EXCEPT ON AZERBAIJAN

¶3. The Culture Commission supported U.S. positions on the proposed amendments to the 2010-11 strategic program and budget in all but one instance. The sole exception came when Azerbaijan was successful in including wording calling for the "implementation of necessary measures to safeguard and preserve cultural heritage in countries in conflict, particularly in occupied territories." The Azeri delegation had originally proposed to insert this language into Main Line of Action 1 of the draft program, which concerns the 1972 World Heritage Convention. Enough delegations, including the United States, objected to the placement of the language there that it was deflected into Main Line of Action 3, which relates to the protection of cultural objects in time of conflict and the fight against their illicit traffic. The US acquiesced to the Main Line of Action 3 alternative, because it narrows the scope of the original proposal and because there was insufficient support to block the proposal entirely. Comment: Adoption of the Azeri resolution not only opens the door for Azerbaijan to raise complaints about the treatment of cultural property in Nagorno-Karabakh, but also may give an opening to other countries to ask UNESCO to weigh in on their disputes. End Comment.

WWII CULTURAL OBJECTS

¶4. The U.S. delegation was actively involved in informal negotiations on the margins of the Culture Commission's meetings with a view to developing a consensus resolution concerning the "Draft Declaration of Principles Relating to Cultural Objects Displaced in Connection with the Second World War." The U.S. sought a formulation that would definitively end UNESCO's consideration of this matter, since three intergovernmental meetings had failed to find a formulation for the Declaration acceptable to all Member States.

¶5. During Culture Commission sessions, Russia took the lead and penned a draft resolution on the topic that, with modifications, allowed China, Greece, Japan, India and other key players to join consensus. The final wording takes note of the draft declaration produced during the intergovernmental process, refers to "all possible paths to find consensus" being exhausted, and invites

Member States to "pursue opportunities to utilize the work completed thus far, as appropriate." While this language is less final than the United States would have liked, USDEL was gratified that the subject has not been placed on the agenda of any future Executive Board or General Conference sessions.

#### JERUSALEM AND THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

16. The Jerusalem and the Occupied Arab Territories resolutions caused much less difficulty than in recent sessions of the General Conference, Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee. Israel and Jordan worked behind the scenes with the Secretariat of the Culture Sector to produce a draft resolution on Jerusalem and the Implementation of the Action Plan for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. The United States was not involved in the negotiations. As a result of the off-line negotiations, debate on this matter took a mere fifteen minutes. Both resolutions were adopted by consensus, with neither Israel nor Jordan making interventions. The items also were referred to the Executive Board meeting in spring 2010 and the General Conference's next session in 2011.

#### PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS AND ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

17. The U.S. delegation sought to end permanently UNESCO's drawn-out consideration of a "preliminary study on the technical and legal aspects of a possible international standard-setting instrument for the protection of indigenous and endangered languages." The study had been considered at several Executive Board meetings and had been recommended by the 34th General Conference, but had never been completed because its sponsors, notably Venezuela, had not provided the promised extra-budgetary funding for an experts meeting to evaluate the proposal. The United States had hoped that in light of

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the apparent lack of interest in funding the study, it would be possible to end discussion of the topic. Despite U.S. interventions on this point and support from like-minded delegations, Venezuela, joined by Cuba, Guatemala and Bolivia, convinced the Commission that the necessary funds would be forthcoming. These delegations thus succeeded in having the item put on the agenda of the 36th General Conference.

#### ELEVEN CATEGORY II CENTERS CREATED

18. The Commission also approved the creation of 11 new Category II centers, with particular attention being paid to the establishment in South Africa of a new African World Heritage Fund and in Zacatecas, Mexico of a regional World Heritage institute.

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